

Dirty Ditches Puppet Play

Goal:

To help children understand what can happen to wildlife when garbage is simply dumped in a vacant lot or along a roadside.

Background:

Every day, each person in Wisconsin throws away approximately 4.7 pounds of trash. Most people give little thought as to where it goes and what happens to it when it gets there. In the United States, “away” means a landfill, incinerator or even the ocean! All too often, however, trash that is not properly disposed of and ends up dumped in a vacant lot or in a roadside ditch. Not only is this “trash stashing” unsightly, it is also dangerous to wildlife. Birds, large fish and small mammals can be strangled in the loops of plastic six-pack holders. Some wildlife mistake shiny litter for food. When pop-tops and bottle caps are eaten they can cause injury. “Styrofoam” cups, plastic cellophane wrappers and cigarette butts have been found in the stomachs of deer. Broken glass, edges of opened cans and empty jars are all dangerous. Animals can get cut, get infections and even die. Small mammals often get trapped in slippery glass jars and pop bottles.

This activity will help children learn that dumping trash “anywhere” can be harmful to the environment. The best place to safely dispose of trash is in a sanitary landfill where it is buried with dirt. To prevent landfills from filling up too quickly, we must reduce, reuse and recycle whenever possible.

Materials:

Wee Crafts*

(patterns for raccoon, fox and owl puppets)

Band-aids

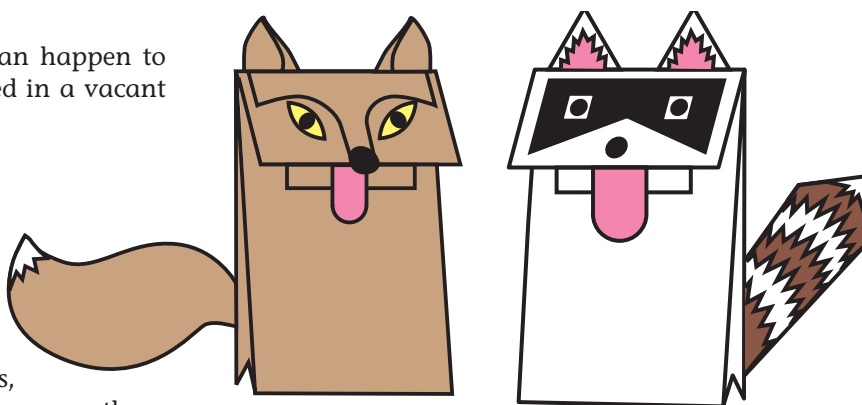
Recycling containers

Landfill picture*




Garbage pile: old shoe, crumpled newspapers, plastic six-pack holders, polystyrene tray or egg

carton, cardboard, tin can with sharp lid exposed, a piece of broken glass, glass jar, and other assorted trash and recyclable items.

* Found in **Wee Recyclers Online Resources**,
<http://dnr.wi.gov/eeek/teacher/weerecyclers.htm>



Preparation:

-  Make puppets from reusable materials. Use the patterns from the **Wee Recyclers Online Resources** or ideas from the puppet section of **Wee Crafts**.
-  Assemble garbage items into a pile near the storytelling area.
-  If only one adult is available to operate puppets, use hands for the Rocky Raccoon and Freddy Fox puppets. Prop the Olivia Owl puppet in a sturdy bottle and stand it near you when Olivia Owl enters the play.

Procedure:

1. Introduce the children to Rocky Raccoon and Freddy Fox. Tell them these animals are friends who like to play in fields and wooded areas. They are very curious about anything that is unfamiliar to them. Like many animals, they don't always know the difference between what is safe and what is dangerous. Sometimes animals will eat or play with trash that people leave behind. The trash can hurt animals or make them sick.
2. Tell the children that Rocky Raccoon and Freddy Fox will learn in this story what can happen to animals when people dump their trash in the roadside ditch.
3. At the end of the story, children can help Rocky and Freddy clean up the trash and help decide how to dispose of it properly.

Dirty Ditches

Characters:

Rocky Raccoon

Freddy Fox

Olivia Owl

Narrator: Once there were two young animal friends, Rocky Raccoon and Freddy Fox. They lived and played in a big field. One sunny day, Rocky went to Freddy's house.

DING-DONG (*Freddy appears.*)

Rocky: Hi Freddy, can you come out to play with me?

Freddy: Yes, but my father says I have to stay away from vacant lots and roadside ditches.

Rocky: Why can't you play in vacant lots?

Freddy: My father says it is very dangerous. People have dumped things there that they do not want anymore. Things like old refrigerators, tires and broken windows.

Rocky: Oh. Why can't you play in roadside ditches?

Freddy: People have thrown things they don't want there, too. Things like old bottles, cans, paper and just about anything else you can think of. It is just not safe for animals to play there anymore.

Rocky: But I know a really neat ditch to play in. I think it's pretty safe. Besides, we'll be careful.

Freddy: Well, I don't know.

Rocky: Oh come on. It will be really fun. Let's at least look at it.

Freddy: Okay.

(*Animals go to ditch.*)

Freddy: Yuck! Look at all that trash.

Rocky: Hey, let's go down there and look around. I bet we'll find some neat stuff.

Freddy: No, it could be dangerous. We might get hurt.

Rocky: Oh, come on, Freddy, we'll be careful. We won't get hurt.

Freddy: (*reluctantly*) Well, okay.

(*Animals make their way into the garbage.*)

Rocky: (*picking up old shoe*) Hey, look, someone's old shoe! PEE-YEW!

Freddy: And look at all the newspaper here.

Rocky: Yes, and all the broken glass, too.

Freddy: (*appears with a plastic six-pack holder around both of his paws*) Help! Rocky help me! I can't get this off and it's hurting me! (*Rocky helps get it off.*) Thanks for helping me. I'm glad you were here.

Rocky: Hey, look at this. (*picking up some Styrofoam*) I wonder if it's good to eat? CHOMP CHOMP (*as he takes a bite*). It tastes okay (*and eats more*).

Freddy: I don't think you should eat that.

Rocky: I think you're right. Oooooohhhh, my stomach hurts now. Maybe we should go home.

Freddy: Oweee! (*Freddy cries in pain.*) I stepped on a sharp can and now my paw is bleeding! (*Freddy hops in pain.*)

Rocky: Ouch! I just got cut by a jagged piece of glass. Ow, it hurts. (*He starts to cry.*)

(*Enter Olivia Owl. She swoops down and lands by her friends.*)

Olivia Owl: Hello my friends. What's wrong? You seem to be hurt.

Freddy: We are, Olivia Owl! We got hurt by the trash that people threw in this ditch.

Rocky: Yeah, we just wanted to play. Instead we got hurt because people are so careless.

Olivia Owl: I'm sad that you are hurt. Here, I happen to have a band-aid for both of you. They should make your "owees" feel better. (*A band-aid is put on one of Rocky's paws and another is put on one of Freddy's paws.*) Sometimes people are not careful and they dump their trash anywhere. Trash doesn't belong here.

Freddy: Where **does** trash belong?

Olivia Owl: First of all, it is wrong to throw garbage and unwanted things in a vacant lot – it's against the law. Dumping trash along the roadside is littering and we know litter can be dangerous to plants, animals and people.

Freddy: I'll say, look what happened to us.

Rocky: So what should people do with their trash?

Olivia Owl: Maybe all of **you** (*directed toward the children*) can help us figure out what people should do with their trash.

Freddy: Can some of these things be recycled? (*Allow children to decide which things can be recycled. Let them tell Rocky and Freddy into which recycling containers to place items.*)

Rocky: What about the rest of this stuff?

Freddy: Can any of it be used again? Do some things belong in the trash? Where will the trash eventually end up? (*Allow for discussion of options.*)

Olivia Owl: I'm proud of all of you. You did a great job deciding which things can be recycled and reused. Any trash that can't be recycled or reused should be taken to a landfill.

Freddy: What's a landfill?

Olivia Owl: A landfill is a special place where trash is taken. Trash is put in a big hole and then carefully covered with dirt. That way, no one gets hurt – animals or people. The problem is that landfills are quickly filling up.

Rocky: If all of this trash had been recycled or put into a landfill, then we wouldn't have gotten hurt.

Freddy: Right. Everyone has to help and work together to put trash where it belongs.

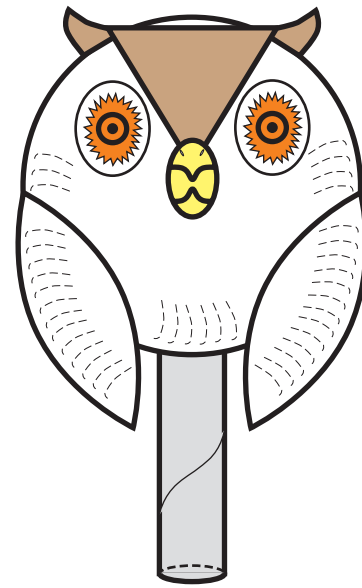
Olivia Owl: You've learned a lot today. Now it's time to go home.

Freddy: Yes. We've gotten hurt and have learned it is not safe for us to play where people have littered and left their trash.

Rocky: Well, I hope you people have learned something, too! For our sake, please don't dump your trash where it doesn't belong.

Freddy, Rocky, Olivia:



Good-bye boys and girls!



Let's Talk About It:

1. How do Freddy and Rocky get hurt?
2. How do you feel when you see litter on the ground?
3. Why shouldn't people dump their trash where it doesn't belong?
4. What should be done with things like glass, cans and newspaper?
5. Where should the rest of the trash be taken?
6. Show children the landfill picture and explain how garbage is buried and covered. (Refer to landfill activities in this guide for more ideas and information.)

Going Beyond:

-  Assist children in creating their own puppet friends who can help them recycle. Use old bags, socks, leftover scraps of paper and other reusable materials. See the puppet section of this guide for ideas.
-  Plastic six-pack holders should be disposed of in the garbage. However, sometimes they end up in the water or on the ground where animals get caught in them. Using a pair of child-safe scissors let your children snip through each ring of a plastic holder. Tell your children they are helping to keep animals from getting stuck in the rings. Then, have your children throw the holder into the trash.